



February 2012



Jodi Ross,
Town
Manager

jross@westfordma.gov
www.westfordma.gov/tm
978-692-5500

Subscribe to Town News



**Receive Important Town
Notices and Information**
See page 9.

**Burning Permits Now
Available Online**
See page 7.

**St. Patrick's Day
Luncheon for Westford
Seniors on Tuesday,
March 13th**
See Page 6.

**Westford Recycling
Commission, Trends in
Recycling Efforts**
See page 10.

**Annual Town Meeting
Saturday, March 24, 2012
10:00AM at the Abbot
School**

Watch Meetings Online

westford
CAT

www.westfordcat.org

Dear Westford Residents,

Our annual town meeting is swiftly approaching and will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 24, 2012. The warrant contains 37 articles which the Board of Selectmen will begin reviewing on February 14th. All warrant article reports will be posted on our town website by March 9th, and there will be a brief summary of the articles in our March newsletter.

We have several articles on the warrant related to the parking issues of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. In an attempt to reach consensus prior to town meeting, residents, abutters to the trail, and other interested parties are invited to attend an all-boards meeting on February 29th at 7:00p.m. in the Stony Brook School auditorium. More information will follow on our website.

We have finalized the town's Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 operating budget, which totals \$94,448,005 and represents a 2.35 % increase over last year. We are also recommending appropriating \$1,313,500 to capital needs, which includes depositing \$171,528 into our capital stabilization account. Unfortunately we are projected to receive \$129,970 less state aid than in Fiscal Year 2012, which resulted in some changes from our preliminary budget that was presented to the Selectmen and Finance Committee back in November. Although we are balanced for Fiscal Year 2013, FY2014 has a projected deficit of \$3.4 million. Five of the ten town unions have agreed to forgo step increases in FY12 and receive no Cost of Living Adjustments in FY12 and 13 to assist us with closing this gap.

To help explain why our town is experiencing financial strain, it is important to note that we are limited by Proposition 2 1/2 to increase tax revenue by no more than 2 1/2%, and we have experienced basically either level or decreased local and state revenues over the past 5 years. At the same time, many of our town's operating expenses are increasing at a much greater rate. Some examples include health insurance, which accounts for 10% of our total town operating budget, where expenses have on average increased 15% annually. These increases incorporate adding previously unenrolled employees to our plan when they choose to become members (about 67% of our employees subscribe to our plan). In FY11, 75 existing employees became new members on our town's health plan.

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Middlesex Retirement assessments have risen from \$2,312,418 in FY08 to \$3,168,000 in FY13, which represents an average 7.4% increase each year. Gasoline for our town vehicles rose from \$266,705 in FY09 to \$304,085 in FY12, representing a 4.7% annual increase. State aid has remained almost level since FY10 when it was \$17,315,949 to FY13 when it is \$17,650,236. Investment income has dropped significantly. We earned our peak amount on our investments in FY07 with \$846,064 in revenue. In FY13 we have budgeted our investment income at \$66,625 or about 8% of FY07's income. Motor vehicle excise has decreased since FY06 from \$3,006,704 to a projected \$2,859,287 for FY13. New growth and local revenues are heavily tied to construction, so when the economy slows down, so do those sources of revenues. For the past several years we have found ways to control expenses and reduce department budgets where possible to absorb these costs, but as we are a service operation, most of our expenses are personal services (salaries).

The town continues to investigate National Grid's response to our October snowstorm. The Energy Committee will appear before the Selectmen on February 28th to report on its findings and make recommendations.

In closing, it is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of two more Westford institutions. Dave Levy, Chairman of our Cable Advisory Committee, was a tireless advocate for Westford in his role on this committee. He was instrumental in negotiating both our Comcast and Verizon FIOS agreements. Greg Dana, a long-time call member of our Westford fire department, and a renowned local small businessman, passed away in January. Both men gave so much to our town, and both will be greatly missed. Please join me in extending our most sincere condolences to their families, friends and loved ones.

Sincerely,



Jodi Ross

Veterans Corner

Westford Veteran's Services Department, what is it?



First of all, this office is NOT affiliated with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA). We are a town department that is an advocate for you, the military veteran and your family, helping you navigate the federal and state benefits. Massachusetts offers one of the most comprehensive veterans benefit program in the country. Between the VA and the state programs, there are numerous opportunities to provide medical and financial assistance. We are here to explain them to you and assist you in applying for the benefit.

How can we help you?

Our office is located at 23 Depot Rd., behind Abbot School in the Millennium Building, Door #9. We are also at the Cameron Senior Center *every Thursday morning* for quick questions. If you want to spend some time and talk about benefits in detail or a specific situation, call 978-392-1170 or email veterans@westfordma.gov to schedule an appointment.

Veterans, an important note! Did you serve in Vietnam? How about the Gulf War? If so, the VA presumes that specific disabilities diagnosed in certain veterans were caused by their military service. VA does this because of the unique circumstances of their military service. If one of these conditions is diagnosed in a veteran in one of these groups, VA presumes that the circumstances of his/her service caused the condition, and disability compensation can be awarded. Call the Veterans Services office or visit the VA website at www.va.gov.

Check us out at the Town of Westford's website page <http://www.westfordma.gov/veterans>



J. V. Fletcher Library News

Help Your Library Plan it's Future

Be on the lookout for a survey mailing to your home mid-February from the library.

Your input will indicate the path that your library's future will follow. This process allows you to take part in the J. V. Fletcher Library's Long Range Planning - a five year Plan of Service, 2014 - 2018, which is a mandate to retain certification by the state and be eligible for grant funding.

Please take 15 minutes to fill out our brief questionnaire either on-line or via hard copy mailing.

This is your opportunity to rate and comment on currently provided library services, indicate services you would like us to offer, share with us what you value most about the Library, as well as how we could improve your library experience.

This survey will be available on-line via [Survey Monkey](https://www.surveymonkey.com) or from a link on the library's web site, www.westfordlibrary.org.

Your survey input will guide the future path of your library.

-Thank you



Cameron Senior Center News



Former Red Sox catcher, Rich Gedman, shared his experiences at the Men's Breakfast held on January 10th.



Cameron Senior Center News (continued)

Cameron Upcoming Events

During the month of February

Cameron closet thrift shop sale during the month of February. All items \$1 per bag at Cameron Senior Center.

Tuesday - Friday February 15 - 17, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM and Monday, February 27th, 1 - 3 PM.

Food Pantry located at Cameron

Wednesday, February 29th

Ladies luncheon at "99" at 11:30. Call Cameron desk for reservation.

Thursday, March 1st

Women's Breakfast at Cameron, at 8:30 AM. Call Cameron desk for reservation.

Tuesday, March 6th

Foxwoods Day Trip and/or Thursday, March 15th Saint Patrick Show Fest.

Call Cameron desk for reservation.

Tuesday, March 13th

Men's Breakfast at Cameron, at 8 AM. Call Cameron desk for reservation.

Tuesday, March 13th

St. Patrick's Day Luncheon with the Council on Aging for Westford Seniors, 11 AM - 2 PM.

Please call Cameron desk for reservation. Cost \$7.

Meal served around 11:45 at the Franco American Club.

Tuesday, March 27th

To Stay or Not to Stay... an informational breakfast at Cameron covering the issues that impact today's homeowners at 8:30 - 10 AM.

Call Cameron desk for reservation. .

Fuel Assistance applications are available, call 978-692-5523 for more information.

For questions, or reservations call Cameron Center Desk: 978-692-5523

Transportation available weekdays for age 60 and over and the disabled.

Please call 978-399-2322.

Fire Department News

Burning Permits Now Available Online

New this year the Westford Fire Department is offering the option for town residents to apply for a burning permit on-line through the Town Website: www.westfordma.gov/permits. This option will allow residents to activate a permit each day they wish to burn when burning is allowed. This option will eliminate the need for residents to come to the fire station as well as having to call the fire station each day a resident wishes to burn. The on-line permit **must be activated each day** a resident wishes to burn; Online burning permits do NOT automatically allow you to burn.

Residents still have the option to go to any fire station and apply for a burning permit if they wish not to use the online option. Residents who do not use the on-line option must call the station each day they wish burn.

We hope residents will take advantage of the online system in activating an Open Burning Permit. Questions or problems please call 978-692-5542.

Open Burning Season began January 15, and ends May 1, 2012

Outdoor Burning Guidelines

A Permit is Required from Local Fire Warden/Fire Chief

A permit must be obtained from the local fire warden, usually the local fire chief. Weather conditions can change rapidly, especially in the spring, and fire wardens will determine on a daily basis when it is safe to conduct open burning. If winds kick up or other atmospheric conditions change suddenly, making it unsafe to burn, permits can be rescinded (cancelled).

The open burning must be a minimum of 75 feet from all buildings and must be conducted between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and must take place on the land closest to the source of material to be burned, according to Department of Environmental Protection regulations (310 CMR DEP 7.07). People conducting illegal burning, or who allow a fire to get out of control, may be held liable for costs of extinguishing a fire, fined, and even imprisoned (MGL c.48 s.13).

With A Permit, Burning of the Following Materials is Allowed:

- Brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris from other than commercial or industrial land clearing operations
- Materials normally associated with the pursuit of agriculture such as, fruit tree prunings, dead raspberry stalks, blueberry patches for pruning purposes, and infected beehives for disease control.
- Trees and brush resulting from agricultural land clearing.
Fungus infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available.

Burning of the Following Materials is Prohibited Statewide:

- Brush, trees, cane and driftwood from commercial and/or industrial land clearing operations.
- Grass, hay, leaves and stumps, and tires.
Construction material and debris.

(continued on next page)

Fire Department News

(continued from previous page)

How to Safely Ignite the Fire

- An adult should always be present during open burning and children and pets should be kept at a safe distance away. Select a location away from utility lines.
- Use paper and kindling to start a fire and add progressively larger pieces of wood. Parts of a leftover Christmas tree may also be used.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene or any other flammable liquid to start a fire! The risk of personal injury in these cases is very high.
- Burn one small pile at a time and slowly add to it. This will help keep the fire from getting out of control.

Fires Must be Attended Until Completely Extinguished

Do not leave your fire burning unattended. This is a reason to revoke your burning permit.

Fire Control Tools and Water Supply Must Be Present

The water supply can be a pressurized fire extinguisher, a pump can, or garden hose; and be sure to test it out before igniting the fire to be sure it works properly. Also, if relying on a garden hose double-check that the water supply is turned on and that there are no cracks in the hose itself. You are required to have a water supply and fire control tools on hand.

Watch the Wind: Be Prepared to Extinguish All Open Burning

It is unsafe to burn during high winds. Use common sense and don't wait for the fire department to contact you that it has become unsafe to burn. Sudden wind change is how most open burning gets out of control.

Don't Delay a Call for Help

If for some reason, the fire should get out of control, call the fire department immediately. Use the utmost caution to prevent injury to yourself or family members or any damage by fire to your home.

April is the Cruellest Month

April is usually the worst month for brush fires. When snow pack recedes, before new growth emerges, last year's dead grass, leaves and wood are dangerous tinder. Winds also tend to be stronger and more unpredictable during April. Unfortunately many people wait until the warmer weather to conduct open burning.

Prevent Wildfires by Burning During Wet and Snowy Conditions

Prevent permit fires from becoming wild land fires by burning early in the season. Wet and snowy winter conditions hinder the rapid spread of fire on or under the ground. Weather conditions and increased fire danger may lead to many days when burning cannot be allowed to take place.



Water Department News

The lonely and unappreciated water meter usually lives out of sight and mind tucked away in the corner of a basement or utility room with only the occasional spider to keep it company. Its meager existence further concealed by boxes of old records, weary athletic equipment, or books that you're never going to read. Even worse – the unlucky meter may be wrongly imprisoned behind a wall of sheet-rock lest its unattractive visage offend a guest.

We're in the midst of our meter replacement program, and our friendly meter folks have occasionally experienced difficulty accessing customer meters due to the aforementioned clutter. This can create delays in completing the replacement or even having to re-schedule the appointment – an inconvenience to all.

Something else to consider: the emergency water shut-off valve is located at the meter, and you probably don't want to frantically fumble through a mess to get to it during a leak. And if you don't already know – it's a good idea to find out where your meter is located.

The Water Department would like to remind our valued customers that the water meter needs space to thrive – don't fence them in!

Please keep your water meter free, clear, and accessible at all times - and ***never cover up behind a permanent wall!***

We appreciate your cooperation!



A contented water meter in its natural habitat.



Subscribe to Town Notices

You may view notices on the website, on Twitter, through an RSS feed, or by subscribing to email alerts. Please visit www.westfordma.gov/subscriber for more information.

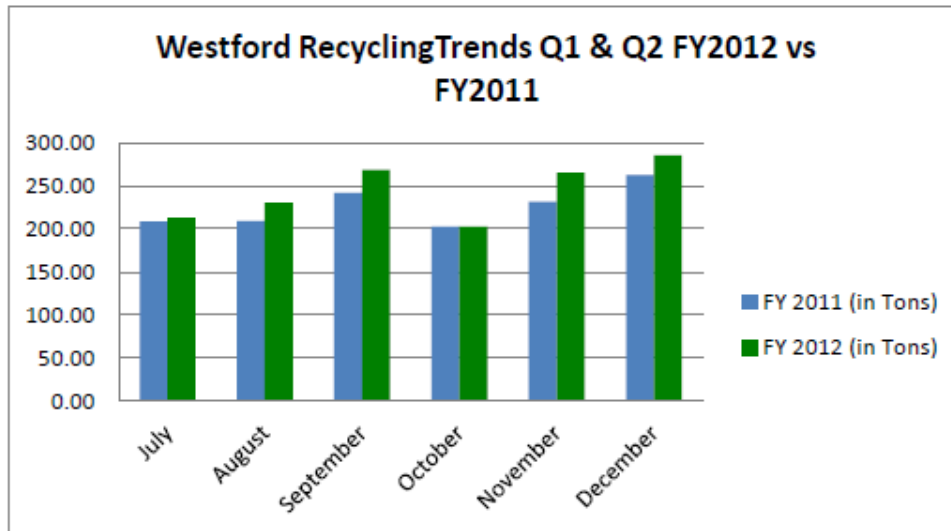


Westford Recycling Commission News

Trends in Westford Recycling Efforts (FY2012)

Recycling

Westford had an increase of 108.63 tons of recycling in the first two quarters of FY2012 compared to the previous year. This is an 8.0 % increase during this period. In the first half of FY2012, recycling has increased overall.

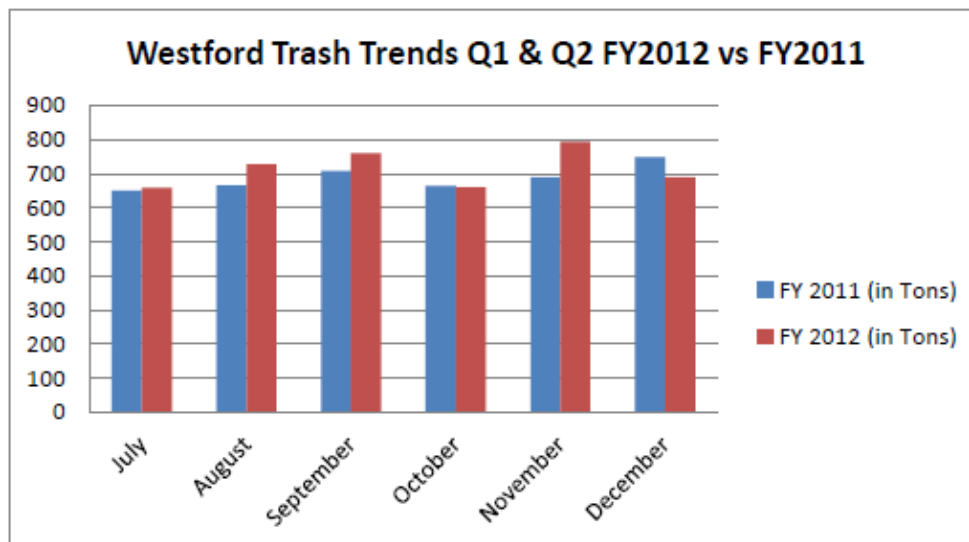


Westford Recycling Statistics Q1 & Q2 FY2012 vs FY2011

Tonnage Q1 & Q2 FY2011	1,355.19
Tonnage Q1 & Q2 FY2012	1,463.82
Percent Change	8.02%
Tonnage Change	108.63

Trash

Westford had an increase in 161 tons of trash in Q1 and Q2 FY2012 compared to the previous year. This is a 3.91% increase during that period and equates to an increase in tipping fees of \$10,815. In the first half of FY2012, trash has also increased overall. The WRC is exploring the increase and confirming the data; currently the Commission does not have information as to why the town trash tonnage has increased.



Westford Trash Statistics Q1 & Q2 FY2012 vs FY2011

Tonnage Q1 & Q2 FY2011	4,128.51
Tonnage Q1 & Q2 FY2012	4,289.94
Percent Change	3.91%
Tonnage Change	161.43
Tipping fee (increase)	\$ 10,815.81